

**Stakeholder Surveys 2004**  
**Virginia Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control**  
**Executive Summary**

The Virginia Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control conducted stakeholder surveys in April and May 2004, as part of a biannual review of the strategic issues and goals of the Department's strategic plan.

The purpose of the surveys was to assess public safety and customer service issues important to the department's various customer groups. The issues addressed by each survey include the following:

- Attitudes relating to the severity of drunk driving offenses and the underage purchase of alcohol and tobacco.
- The utility of educational materials, training activities and grants offered by ABC.
- The frequency and basis for contacts with the various departments and employees at ABC.
- The location, product selection, hours and customer service provided in ABC retail stores.
- Overall satisfaction with customer service provided by ABC.

**Who did we survey?**

**Phone Surveys:** ABC contracted with the Center for Public Policy at Virginia Commonwealth University to conduct telephone surveys of a random sample of adult citizens over 21 and a random sample of ABC licensed establishments.

**Mail surveys** were developed and sent to the following groups:

- Community groups involved with education, prevention, and public safety
- Chiefs and sheriffs across the state
- Elected local government officials and planning or zoning departments in municipalities across the state
- ABC Beer and Wine Wholesaler Licensees
- Store customers through a survey distributed one weekend in April 2004, with responses mailed directly to the Department

**I. PUBLIC SAFETY**

The first goal of the ABC strategic plan focuses on effective public safety through increased compliance regarding underage sales of alcohol and tobacco and responsible consumption. A variety of questions in the surveys addressed these issues.

- Better than seven in 10 ABC licensees (73%) consider the Department very or extremely effective in promoting the responsible sale and consumption of alcohol. Eight in ten licensees think the information provided on regulations and the responsibilities of license holders is extremely or very clear.
- Chiefs and sheriffs that responded to surveys indicated (83%) they are aware of the ABC Agent(s) assigned to their perspective jurisdictions and have made contact with them primarily regarding license applications (79%); illegal alcohol activity (78%) and to request the assistance of ABC Special Agents (78%).
- In the past 12 months, law enforcement professionals have made contact with ABC Special Agents most frequently on a monthly basis and strongly agreed that the quality of that contact was professional, timely and handled in accordance with expectations.

- Of the local government respondents, 66% indicated they were satisfied or generally satisfied while only 4% were dissatisfied with the level of oversight given to businesses selling alcohol in their community

### ***Underage Compliance***

Increasing the compliance regarding underage sales of tobacco and alcohol is a major goal of the Department. Stakeholders provide a variety of information on this issue

- For respondents to the citizen survey, underage use of tobacco products was more likely to be considered a big or moderate problem in the community than other problems considered. The over-selling of alcohol to patrons at bars and restaurants was the least likely to be considered a big or moderate problem.

	Big or Moderate Problem	Small Problem or None at all
Underage tobacco use	64%	24%
Drunk driving	56%	34%
Underage drinking	54%	28%
Over-selling to patrons	28%	50%

- Chiefs, sheriffs, and community groups indicated a high concern for these issues. However, 9 out of 10 these respondents indicated drunk driving and underage drinking as the most serious problem and six out of ten indicated underage access to tobacco as a serious problem.
- Eight in ten of all survey respondents believe that access to alcohol by minors comes from friends and relatives. Only 10% think that stores and restaurants are the most common source of alcohol to underage persons.
- In the citizen survey, over half of the public (56%) believes they are very likely to report a business seen selling alcohol to minors. When asked where they would make such a report, the most common response was to the police or sheriff.
- Fewer respondents (37%) believe themselves very likely to report parents or other adults serving alcohol to teenagers. The most common response was to report this kind of observation to the police or sheriff.

	Very Likely to Report
Business selling alcohol to minors	56%
Parents or adults serving alcohol to teenagers	37%

### ***Compliance & Tax Management***

Virginia ABC Wine & Beer Wholesalers and Importer were asked to rate current services provided by their Compliance Agent and Tax Management Services division, and the usefulness of possible future services

- Eight out of 10 respondents rated services provided by Compliance Agents as excellent to good in professionalism and courteousness. Seven out of 10 rated these services as excellent to good in areas such as ability to resolve issues, knowledge, timely response to request, and accessibility.
- Eight out of 10 respondents rated Tax Management services as excellent to good in professionalism. Seven out of 10 rated Tax Management services as excellent to good in areas such as ability to resolve issues, knowledge, courteousness and timely response to request,

- Very satisfied to generally satisfied is how 81% of the respondents rate their level of satisfaction with services provided by Tax Management.

### **Education Services**

- Well over half (61%) of the community groups responding have used ABC's educational materials. Of those who have used the materials, prevention campaigns such as "None for the Road" (88%) and Fake I.D. brochures (87%) were indicated to be the most useful. The majority of respondents received these materials through direct mail and at ABC conferences or training.
- ABC licensees, chiefs and sheriffs have the highest awareness of the Department's publications and brochures on responsible serving and "do not sell" stickers and date decals.
- Public awareness of ABC programs and services for citizen groups is highest for printed materials related to alcohol laws as indicated in the chart below. Awareness was lowest for the toll free number to report violations and ABC agents speaking at community events.

	Heard of Before	Not Heard of
Publications	41%	57%
Educational programs	34%	41%
Law enforcement division in Dept.	31%	67%
ABC agents speaking at events	19%	79%
Toll free number	19%	80%

## **II. WEBSITE USAGE**

- Use of the ABC Website by respondents varies greatly. The largest user is the Wholesaler and Importer Licensees in which 72% of the respondents have used the ABC web site to view numerous forms and reports. If given the opportunity to submit information on-line (electronically), 77% of this group of respondents would like to submit product approval applications electronically; 71% would like to submit tax information electronically; 56% would like to submit payment transactions; 50% would like to submit tax-exempt invoices electronically; and 46% would like to submit purchase order(s) electronically.
- While use of the ABC Web site is low, there is an increase in reported usage from 2002 surveys. Information categories most frequently specified by users included grant application or information, training or conference information, prevention campaigns, agency contact information and tools and education on responsible selling and serving.

Have you ever used the ABC Web site?	YES 2004	YES 2002
Wholesalers & Importers	72%	N/A
Community Groups	39%	N/A
Chiefs & Sheriffs	17%	12%
Licensees	17%	6%
Local Government	9%	N/A
Citizen Survey	1%	0%

- Six in ten mixed beverage licensees say they would be very or somewhat likely to place orders through the ABC web site, while 38% are not too or not at all likely to do so.

### III. CUSTOMER SERVICE

Two groups of customers use the ABC retail stores; Virginia citizens and all ABC mixed beverage licensees. Information about store customer service was included in the citizen survey, licensee survey and store customer survey.

#### ABC Stores

- For the licensee survey, 35% of respondents were mixed beverage licensees. In this group, approximately six in ten mixed beverage licensees rated the ABC stores as excellent or very good on all areas asked. The highest proportion considered the ABC stores to be excellent or very good on product variety (67%). Convenience of store hours was rated excellent or very good by the smallest portion (59%).

<b>Ratings Among Mixed Beverage Licensees</b>	<b>Excellent or Very Good</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Fair or Poor</b>
Variety of products	67%	20%	10%
Convenience of locations	66%	24%	8%
Access to pickup areas	62%	25%	9%
Convenience of hours	59%	29%	9%

- Eight out of ten licensees indicated that ABC staff provide helpful service (85%) and are well informed (80%) always or most of the time.
- In the citizen survey, half of Virginians (52%) say they purchase liquor or Virginia wines at the ABC stores. More ABC store customers in both surveys considered product variety to be excellent or very good than any other dimension rated. The convenience of store hours was the least likely to be rated in positive terms.

	<b>Excellent or Very Good</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Fair or Poor</b>
Variety of products available	46%	39%	9%
Customer service	43%	41%	13%
Store layout and design	35%	46%	12%
Convenience of store locations	28%	51%	18%
Convenience of store hours	20%	46%	27%

- Overall 9 out of 10 customer respondents were extremely or very satisfied with the customer service provided by ABC stores. Just 5% are not too or not at all satisfied with the customer services at the stores.
- About half of Virginians experience no trouble finding the products they are looking for at ABC stores with 51% indicating they always find what they are looking for and 36% find what they are looking for most of the time. Ten percent say they find what they are looking for sometimes, rarely, or never.
- When customers have trouble finding the product they are looking for, the most common response is to ask for assistance (62%). Other responses include 15% who say they would choose a different brand of liquor in their preferred size while 9% would be brand loyal, choosing a different size product and 11% saying they would leave without a purchase in that situation.

## Store Location

- Local government professionals indicated they were 63% satisfied and 8% dissatisfied regarding the location of ABC stores in their locality. The top three contacts to make when planning a new store location or relocation were the Zoning Department, Planning Department and the City Manager or County Administrator.
- Regarding the location of ABC stores, a majority of customers (66%) travel 5 miles or less to an ABC store with another 20% of customers traveling 10 miles or under. Travel time to an ABC store was under 10 minutes for 59% of customers and under 20 minutes for an additional 28% of customers.

## **Policy Opinion**

Virginia citizens were asked questions about private sales of liquor and potential Sunday opening of ABC stores in certain areas of the state.

- Eight in ten Virginians think it would be a bad or very bad idea to allow grocery and convenience stores to sell liquor (in addition to beer and wine). Among those negative towards this idea, the most common reaction was that access to alcohol would be too easy. Sixteen percent thought private sales of liquor was a good or very good idea. The most common reaction among this group was that selling liquor in grocery and convenience stores would be more convenient for consumers.
- About four in ten (42%) think a system of privately operated liquor stores would be worse than the current system, 32% think it would make no difference, and 17% think the private system would be better.
- Regarding the possibility of ABC store hours on Sundays in some locations, 59% of citizens think this is a bad idea or very bad idea. Only 3% thought this was a very good idea and 29% indicated it was a good idea. The Community Groups surveyed responded similarly to this question about possible Sunday sales.
- Forty-seven percent of mixed beverage licensees say they would be very or somewhat likely to use Sunday store hours while 52% are not too or not at all likely to do so.

## **IV. WHAT DO WE DO WELL**

- ABC Enforcement proactively informs local law enforcement personnel of potential issues and problems. As mandated by state law, 75% of respondents are routinely notified of applications for liquor licenses by ABC enforcement.
- Most often, ABC agents act professionally and respond in a timely manner whenever contacted by local law enforcement for any type of assistance.
- 61% of respondents have at least used ABC's education resources and materials related to the laws and responsible use of alcohol.
- ABC uses multiple methods/mediums to make education materials available to the community and constituents (i.e. mailings, Web site).
- ABC stores have high ratings from multiple customer groups for overall customer service.

## **V. OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT**

- Prevention and education efforts regarding underage consumption should be developed for parents and young adults. Eight in ten of all survey respondents believe that access to alcohol by minors comes from friends and relatives. Only 10% think that stores and restaurants are the most common source of alcohol to underage persons.
- Efforts should also address the reporting of parents or other adults who provide alcohol to underage youth. In the citizen survey, over half of the public (56%) believes they are very likely to report a business seen selling alcohol to minors. Fewer respondents (37%) believe themselves very likely to report parents or other adults serving alcohol to teenagers.
- Implement a speaker's bureau made up of ABC Special Agents to address alcohol education topics. There was a high level of interest (85%) in this area.
- Market and encourage Website usage for filing complaints, obtaining agency contact information, licensee searches and any other services that could potentially exceed customer expectations.
- Seventy-six percent of respondents are not totally familiar with the process for pursuing administrative charges when a licensed establishment is discovered violating the law, and therefore, initiatives to explain the process should be instituted.
- Market and encourage ABC training activities to include but not limited to Public Service Announcements, Videos and Webcasts.
- Conduct focus groups consisting of community constituents to determine the types of training and grants needed in communities.
- Expand Web services for Wholesaler and Importer licensees. The information provided on the web site is useful, and 72% are currently viewing or using the information. The addition of new information and the ability for external parties to submit information electronically will only help to increase usage. With expanded use the information would be more useful if it is updated more frequently without errors.
- The Product Label Approval and Wine Label Registration process should be reviewed for timeliness and efficiency. Conduct focus groups with wholesaler and importer licensees to address issues, design improvements, and and implement suggestions.